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## **On the Translation of Culture-loaded Words in English News**

### **SUR LA TRADUCTION DES MOTS À CHARGE CULTURELLE DANS LES NOUVELLES EN ANGLAIS**

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**Abstract:** This paper analyzes the types of culture-loaded words in English news and explores their translation methods. It is suggested that the translator should take into special consideration the cultural factors in English news and make deft use of different translating methods in different cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** news English; culture-loaded words; translation

**Résumé:** Cet article analyse les types de mots à charge culturelle dans les nouvelles en anglais et étudie leurs méthodes de traduction. Il est suggéré que le traducteur doit prendre particulièrement en considération les facteurs culturels dans les nouvelles en anglais et utiliser de façon habile les différentes méthodes de traduction dans des contextes culturels différents.

**Mots-clés:** nouvelles en anglais; mots à charge culturelle; traduction

## **INTRODUCTION**

The translation of news satisfies the increasing need of cross-cultural communication and features of news language are brought to the attention of more translators. As the most essential elements of a text, word is the most active part during the changing process of a language. The development of the society and the birth of new things are always reflected by the renewing and enriching of the vocabulary. It is common for the reporters to skillfully use the culture-loaded words to express their ideas, which bears distinctive socio-cultural features, could make their reports sound more authentic, vivid and attractive to the readers. When the translators are doing translation, they will usually encounter some cultural problems as well as linguistic problems.

This paper is going to analyze the features and the types of culture-loaded words in English news, exploring suitable ways to deal with those words in news translation.

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## 1. TYPES OF CULTURE-LOADED WORDS IN ENGLISH NEWS

There are many culture-loaded words in English news, such as idioms, allusion, slang, metaphor, euphemism, metonymy, and etc. They are the essence of a language and they are good ways for people to express their minds. These culture-loaded words are gained from human ancestors' early living experience, and they are also an important part of the culture of a society. Not only are they easily-understood, allegoric, and highly-precise, but also they give people edification. The journalists are particularly falling for the certain value of the culture-loaded words, so they widely use them in English newspapers and magazines.

### 1.1 Idioms

Idioms are set phrases and short sentences, which are peculiar to the language in question and stepped in the national and regional culture and ideas, thus being colorful, forcible and thought-provoking. Strictly speaking, idioms are expressions that are not readily understandable from their literal meanings of individual constituents. (Zhang Weiyou , 2004) It is quite common that idioms are frequently used in journalist English. And this phenomenon can show the avant-grade of the western culture at a certain level.

e.g. Inside Rosalyn's velvet glove is a stainless steel hand. (Xu Mingwu, 2003)

The reporter changed "iron" to "steel", and added "stainless". Both of the two treatments made the sentence sound more novel and impressive. And it showed us a lively tender-outside-but-determined-inside Rosalyn, the former first lady of the US.

### 1.2 Allusion

Allusions are mainly derived from legends, fairy tales, and literature works. They usually bear rich cultural information of a nation.

e.g. Censorship of films and videos is becoming draconian in the 1990s. (ibid)

The word "draconian" in example is got from "Draconia". Draconia is a legislator in ancient Greece, who has made a lot of cruel or even ferocious laws during her lifetime. So then people use the word "draconian" to tell the meaning of being cruel or ferocious.

### 1.3 Slang

Slang is a kind of very informal language that includes new and sometimes rude words, especially words used only by particular groups of people. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995)

The readers of the newspapers are various. On the base of accuracy and conciseness, the reporters also tend to adopt some lively expressions, like slang, to raise the readers' interest. Therefore, the news English could be said as a mixed language both literary and common.

e.g. With Great Pains, Clarence Thomas Will Never Cry Uncle (Xu Mingwu, 2003)

This is a title of a report, excerpted from America Today. Clarence Thomas, 106th Presiding Judge of Federal Supreme Court of the US, when the hearing was hold in the Senate, he was accused of once trying molesting a lady employer. But he stepped forward bravely and denied the accusation, contesting for his reputation. The report used the widely known slang "cry uncle" instead of the formal words such as surrender and yield to show the great determination that Clarence Thomas had.

### 1.4 Metaphor

According to some certain words, different cultural background will lead to different associations. So the use of metaphor too, shows us the obvious culture of a society. For example, we often can see in America's newspapers like, hawk(the hard-liners), dove(the moderates), lame duck(an official whose office period will soon end), fat cat(main donators for the political election campaigns), donkey(the Democratic Party), elephant(the Republican Party), mole(long- period lurking spies), coon(a disparaging name for the black) etc.

### 1.5 Euphemism

Euphemism is a polite word or expression that you use instead of a more direct one to avoid shocking or upsetting someone. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1995)

Euphemism can also reflect the features of a society's culture. There are common examples, such as, sex worker(prostitute), adult film(pornographic film), inner city(slum), industrial dispute/action(strike), military involvement(invasion), etc.

### 1.6 Metonymical words

Metonymy refers to words in which the name of one thing is used for that of another associated with it. (Zhang weiyu , 2004) As it can help to avoid dull repeating and save space, and can strengthen the vividness of a language, it is widely used in English newspapers and magazines. For example, Pentagon(United States Department of Defense), Hollywood(American filmdom), Wall Street(New York stock market), etc.

### 1.7 Words with semantic vacancy

It is usually found that some culture-loaded English words have no correspondences in Chinese. For example, American Dream, which is thought to be the base of the American's spirit, that is, everyone is born free and equal; Brampton cocktail, which is actually a painkiller for the people who are suffering from a cancer, and it got its name from the Brampton Thorax Hospital, London where it was firstly used.

## 2. METHODS OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH CULTURE-LOADED WORDS

To the culture-loaded words, we should make certain adjustments in translating methods according to the culture background of the target language, with the hope that the readers would get the same information as the source article conveys. Usually we would adopt the ways of translating English culture-loaded words as follows:

### 2.1 Literal translation

The culture information loaded by the words is usually a reflection of the culture heritage and psychological tendency of a nation. Literal translation can preserve this culture information, and it is good for the intercultural communication between the English-speaking countries and China. Moreover, it can enlarge the vocabulary of the target language. For example, hot dog—热狗; olive branch—橄榄枝; an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—以眼還眼，以牙還牙。

The cultural differences of the words are also reflected in the using of rhetoric. Literal translation can help to preserve the compared meaning, to show the style of the source article, and to reappear the meaning and the spirit of the sources language.

e.g. The death of Princess of Wales unleashed outpourings of newly-coined honorifics, for instance “a present-day Cinderella whose clock struck midnight all too soon.” (Xu Mingwu, 2003)

戴安娜王妃的逝世導致了大量新敬語的產生，比如“一個當代的灰姑娘故事，只是午夜鐘聲過早地敲響”。

Princess of Wales refers to Diana. Here the reporter compares the love story between Diana and Prince Charles to the story of Cinderella and her prince. “Clock struck midnight all too soon” is to say that Diana is like a flash in the pan, too so to diminish. For many of us have already known the allusion, the metaphor here we can adopt the literal translation, “一個當代的灰姑娘故事，只是午夜鐘聲過早地敲響”。

### 2.2 Substitution

Substitution means, in the translation of some English idioms, in order to preserve the meaning of the source article, a constituent may be replaced by a word with different concept meaning but same cultural

connotation (Wang Lei, 2003). Such as, to laugh off one's head—笑掉大牙; some prefer turnips and others pears.—蘿蔔白菜，各有所愛; he cries wine and sells vinegar—掛羊頭，買狗肉。

### 2.3 Addition

In order to preserve the cultural information of the source article, we can add some proper words for explanation to the translated script when we do translating on the base of literal translation if with only the literal translation it could not let the target readers understand what the translated script says fully.

e.g. The bubble has burst for the generation that expected to inherit the "Pacific Century". (Xu Mingwu, 2003)

The "Pacific Century" refers to the 19th century, when the Americans rushed to the west coast from the east coast, that is, the century when the Americans went to develop the western part of their country. So here we should add some explanation words to "太平洋精神" to make the Chinese readers understand the cultural information born by the phrase. So the sentence can be translated as, "一度期望發揚 '太平洋精神' (美國西部開發精神) 的那代人的好夢像肥皂泡那樣破碎了。"

### 2.4 Paraphrasing

There are some strong culture-loaded words in English which can't convey precisely their cultural information they have just by the means of literal translation. Or if we use substitution, it might impose the culture of the target language on that of the source language. Adding too much explanatory words is no more than only explanation. Then, we can use paraphrasing, that is, we take the words with little cultural background in the target language to convey the information by the source article. However, this method would more or less lead to the information loss during the process of translating, but it is inevitable. Look at the following examples:

e.g. Japanese prime ministers tend to have a short shelf life and a weak brand image. (ibid)

The reporter used two commercial words for metaphor. They are "shelf life" and "brand image". Shelf life, means the limited time for a kind of food that can be put on the shelf for sale. For example, in Europe the shelf life of bread is 3 days, and the food must be burn if it is over the time. Brand image, to the Chinese it is much more familiar. Considering the fact that the commodity economy of China doesn't develop much, here we should use paraphrasing to make sure the readers can understand what the sentence means. So the sentence can be translated as "日本歷屆首相往往是上了台不久就下臺，而且品牌形象也欠佳。"

## 3. POINTS TO BE PAID ATTENTION TO BY TRANSLATORS

Different language users have different cultural tendency. They might have different understanding to the same cultural information, or sometimes it would even lead to misunderstanding. So when we do news English translating, besides the mastering of the usage of the language of English, we should have a certain amount of knowledge of the English culture to make sure that we can fully understand the source article. Moreover, there are a large portion of the English news on current political affairs, which are bearing strong political orientation. So the translator should have the capacity of analyzing the current political affairs and correcting the wrongly used words in the news when they are doing news English translating.

As to the various ways of translating English culture-loaded words such as literal translation, substitution, addition, and paraphrasing, the translator should take the group of target readers and the goals of information transmitting into consideration when doing translation, so as to adopt the most proper style of the translation and make the translating work successfully.

## CONCLUSION

Culture-loaded words are like mirrors, showing us a nation's unique culture. While translating English news, the translator should take into special consideration the cultural factors. For that purpose, the translator first should have dense cultural consciousness and rich cultural knowledge; then he must make

deft use of different translating methods in different cultural contexts, bearing the reader always in mind and trying his best to convey the pragmatic function of the news. It is safely to assume that by dealing with culture-loaded words successfully the translation of English news can fulfill its cross-cultural communicative task.

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